Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty

A New Sophism

In March 1945, Christian Zervos asked me to contribute, along with a certain number of writers, to the recommencement issue of his journal, *Les Cahiers d'Art,* conceived with the intent of filling the space between the figures on its cover, 1940–1944, dates significant to many people, with the illustrious names in its table of contents.

I submitted this article, knowing full well that this would immediately make it unavailable to most readers.

May it resound with the right note here where I am placing it, between the before and the after, even if it demonstrates that the after was kept waiting [*faisait antichambre*] so that the before could assume its own place [*pût prendre rang*].

A Logical Problem

A prison warden summons three choice prisoners and announces to them the following:

For reasons I need not make known to you now, gentlemen, I must free one of you. In order to decide which, I will entrust the outcome to a test that you will, I hope, agree to undergo.

There are three of you present. I have here five disks differing only in color: three white and two black. Without letting you know which I will have chosen, I will fasten one of them to each of you between the shoulders, outside, that is, your direct visual field—indirect ways of getting a look at the disk also being excluded by the absence here of any means by which to see your own reflection.

You will then be left at your leisure to consider your companions and their respective disks, without being allowed, of course, to communicate among yourselves the results of your inspection. Your own interest would, in any case, proscribe such communication, for the first to be able to deduce his own color will be the one to benefit from the discharging measure at my disposal.

But his conclusion must be founded upon logical and not simply probabilistic grounds. Keeping this in mind, it is agreed that as soon as one

of you is ready to formulate such a conclusion, he will pass through this door so that he may be judged individually on the basis of his response.

This having been agreed to, each of our three subjects is adorned with a white disk, no use being made of the black ones, of which there were, let us recall, but two.

How can the subjects solve the problem?

The Perfect Solution

After having contemplated one another for *a certain time*, the three subjects take *a few steps* together, passing side by side through the doorway. Each of them then separately furnishes a similar response which can be expressed as follows:

I am a white, and here is how I know it. Since my companions were whites, I thought that, had I been a black, each of them would have been able to infer the following: "If I too were a black, the other would have necessarily realized straight away that he was a white and would have left immediately; therefore I am not a black." And both would have left together, convinced they were whites. As they did nothing of the kind, I must be a white like them. At that, I made for the door to make my conclusion known.

All three thus exited simultaneously, armed with the same reasons for concluding.

Sophistic Value of this Solution

Can this solution, which presents itself as the most perfect of which the problem allows, be obtained experimentally? I leave to the initiative of each the task of deciding.

199 Not that I would go so far as to recommend putting it to the test in real life—even though our era's antinomic progress has, it seems, for some time now, been putting such conditions within the reach of an ever greater number. Indeed, I am afraid that although only winners are foreseen here, practice may well diverge considerably from theory. Moreover, I am not one of those recent philosophers for whom confinement within four walls merely helps us attain the ultimate in human freedom.

But when carried out under the innocent conditions of fiction, the experiment will not disappoint those who have not lost all taste for surprise—I guarantee it. It will perhaps turn out to be of some scientific value to the psychologist, at least if we can trust what seemed to me to result from having tried it with various groups of appropriately chosen, qualified intellectuals: a very peculiar misrecognition on the part of these subjects of the reality of other people.

My only interest is in the logical value of the solution presented. I consider it, in effect, to be a remarkable sophism, in the classical sense of the term—that is, a significant example for the resolution of the forms of a logical function at the historical moment at which the problem these forms raise presents itself to philosophical examination. The story's sinister images will certainly prove to be contingent. But to whatever degree my sophism may seem not irrelevant to our times, its bearing their sign in such images is in no way superfluous—which is why I have preserved here the trappings with which it was brought to my attention one evening by an ingenious host.

I will now place myself under the auspices of he who sometimes dons the philosopher's garb, who—ambiguous—is more often to be sought in the comedian's banter, but who is always encountered in the politician's secretive action: the good logician, odious to the world.

Discussion of the Sophism

Every sophism initially presents itself as a logical error, and a first objection to this sophism can be easily formulated. Let us call "A" the real subject who concludes for himself, and "B" and "C" those reflected subjects upon whose 200
conduct A founds his deduction. One might object that since B's conviction is based on C's expectative, the strength of his conviction must logically dissipate when C stops hesitating; and reciprocally for C with respect to B; both must thus remain indecisive. Nothing therefore necessitates their departure in the case that A is a black. Consequently, A cannot deduce that he is a white.

To this it must first be replied that B and C's whole cogitation is *falsely* imputed to them, for the only situation which could motivate it—the fact of seeing a black—is not, in effect, the true situation. What must be discerned here is whether, supposing this situation were the case, it would be *wrong* to impute this logical thought process to them. Now it would be nothing of the kind, for, according to my hypothesis, it is the fact that neither of them *left first* which allows each to believe he is a white, and their hesitating for but one instant would clearly suffice to reconvince each of them beyond the

shadow of a doubt that he is a white. For hesitation is logically excluded for whomever sees two blacks. But it is also excluded in reality in this first step of the deduction for, since no one finds himself in the presence of a black and a white, there is no way for anyone to leave on the basis of what can be deduced therefrom.

But the objection presents itself more forcibly at the second stage of A's deduction. For if he has legitimately concluded that he is a white—positing that, had he been a black, the others would not have been long in realizing they were whites and leaving—he must nevertheless abandon his conclusion as soon as he comes to it; for at the very moment at which he is stirred into action by his conclusion, he sees the others setting off with him.

Before responding to this objection, let me carefully lay out anew the logical terms of the problem. "A" designates each of the subjects insofar as he himself is in the hot seat and resolves or fails to resolve to conclude about his own case. "B" and "C" are the two others insofar as they are objects of A's reasoning. But while A can correctly impute to the others a thought process which is in fact false (as I have just shown), he can, nevertheless, only take into account their real behavior.

If A, seeing B and C set off with him, wonders again whether they have not in fact seen that he is black, it suffices for him to stop and newly pose the question in order to answer it. For he sees that they too stop: since each
201 of them is really in the same situation as him, or more aptly stated, *is* A insofar as [he is] real—that is, insofar as he resolves or fails to resolve to conclude about himself—each encounters the same doubt at the same moment as him. Regardless of the reasoning A now imputes to B and C, he will legitimately conclude again that he is a white. For he posits anew that, had he been a black, B and C would have had to *continue*; or at the very least, acknowledging their hesitation—which concurs with the preceding argument (here supported by the facts) that makes them wonder whether they are not blacks themselves—he posits that they would have had to *set off again before him* (it is the fact that he is black that gives their very hesitation its definite import, allowing them to conclude that they are whites). It is because they, seeing that he is in fact white, do nothing of the kind, that he himself takes the initiative; which is to say that they all head for the door together to declare that they are whites.

But one can still object that, having removed in this way the obstacle, we have not for all that refuted the logical objection—for the same objection turns up with the reiteration of the movement, reproducing in each of the subjects the very same doubt and arrest.

Assuredly, but logical progress must have been made in the interim. For this time A can draw but one unequivocal conclusion from the common cessation of movement: had he been a black, B and C *absolutely should not have stopped*. Their hesitating a second time in concluding that they are whites would be ruled out at this point: Indeed, a single hesitation suffices for them to demonstrate to each other that certainly neither of them is a black. Thus, if B and C have halted again, A can only be a white. Which is to say that this time the three subjects are confirmed in a certainty permitting of no further doubt or objection.

Withstanding the test of critical discussion, the sophism thus maintains all the constraining rigor of a logical process, on condition that one integrates therein the value of the two *suspensive scansions*. This test exposes the process of verification in the very act in which each of the subjects manifests that it has led him to his conclusion.

Value of the Suspended Motions in the Process 202

Is it justifiable to integrate into the sophism the two *suspended motions* which have thus made their appearance? In order to decide, we must examine their role in the solution of the logical problem.

In fact, they take on this role only after the conclusion of the logical process, since the act they suspend evinces this very conclusion. One thus cannot object on that basis that they bring into the solution an element external to the logical process itself.

Their role, while crucial to the carrying-out [*pratique*] of the logical process, is not that of experience in the verification of an hypothesis, but rather that of something intrinsic to logical ambiguity.

For at first sight the givens of the problem would seem to break down as follows:

(1) Three combinations of the subjects' characteristic attributes are logically possible: two blacks, one white; one black, two whites; or three whites. Once the first combination is ruled out by what all three subjects see, the question as to which of the other two is the case remains open. Its answer derives from:

(2) the experiential data provided by the suspended motions, which amount to signals by which the subjects communicate to each other—in a mode determined by the conditions of the test—what they are forbidden to exchange in an intentional mode, namely, what each sees of the others' attributes.

But this is not at all the case, as it would give the logical process a spatialized conception—the same spatialized conception that turns up every time the logical process appears to be erroneous, and that constitutes the only objection to the solubility of the problem.

It is precisely because my sophism will not tolerate a spatialized conception that it presents itself as an aporia for the forms of classical logic, whose "eternal" prestige reflects an infirmity which is nonetheless recognized as their own[1]—namely, that these forms never give us anything which cannot already *be seen all at once*.

203 In complete opposition to this, the coming into play as signifiers of the phenomena here contested makes the temporal, not spatial, structure of the logical process prevail. What the *suspended motions* disclose is not what the subjects see, but rather what they have found out positively about *what they do not see*: the appearance of the black disks. What constitutes these suspended motions as signifying is not their direction, but rather their *interruption* [*temps d'arrêt*]. Their crucial value is not that of a binary choice between two inertly[2] juxtaposed combinations—rendered incomplete by the visual exclusion of the third combination—but rather of a verificatory movement instituted by a logical process in which a subject transforms the three possible combinations into three *times of possibility*.

This is also why, while *a single* signal should suffice for the sole choice imposed by the first erroneous interpretation, *two* scansions are necessary to verify the two lapses implied by the second, and only valid, interpretation.

Far from being experiential data external to the logical process, the *suspended motions* are so necessary to it that only experience can make the logical process lack here the synchronicity implied by the suspended motions as produced by a purely logical subject; only experience can make their function in the verification process founder.

The suspended motions represent nothing, in effect, but levels of degrada-
204 tion whose necessity brings out the increasing order of temporal instances that are registered within the logical process so as to be integrated into its conclusion.

This can be seen in the logical determination of the *interruptions* they constitute, this determination—whether logician's objection or subject's doubt—revealing itself at each moment as the subjective unfolding of a temporal instance, or more aptly stated, as the slipping away [*fuite*] of the subject within a formal exigency.

These temporal instances, which are constitutive of the process of the sophism, permit us to recognize a true logical movement in it. This process calls for an examination of the quality of its times.

The Modulation of Time in the Sophism's Movement: The Instant of the Glance, the Time for Comprehending, and the Moment of Concluding

One can isolate in the sophism three *evidential moments* whose logical values prove to be different and of increasing order. To lay out the chronological succession of the three moments would amount once again to spatializing them through a formalism which tends to reduce discourse to an alignment of signs. To show that the instance of time presents itself in a different *mode* in each of these moments would be to preserve their hierarchy, revealing therein a tonal discontinuity that is essential to their value. But to discern in the temporal *modulation* the very function by which each of these moments, in its passage to the next, is resorbed therein, the last moment which absorbs them alone remaining, would be to reconstruct their real succession and truly understand their genesis in the logical movement. That is what I will attempt, starting from as rigorous a formulation as possible of these evidential moments.

(I) Being opposite two blacks, one knows that one is a white.

We have here a *logical exclusion* which gives the movement its basis. The fact that this logical exclusion is anterior to the movement, that is, that we can assume it to be clear to the subjects *with* the givens of the problem—givens which forbid a combination involving three blacks—is independent of the dramatic contingency isolating the preambular statement of these givens. Expressing it in the form *two blacks : one white*, we see the *instantaneousness* of its evidence—its fulguration time, so to speak, being equal to zero.

But its formulation at the outset is already modulated by the subjectivization, albeit impersonal, which takes form here in the "one knows that . . . ," and by the conjunction of propositions which constitutes less a formal hypothesis than a still indeterminate matrix of such a hypothesis; we can put it in the following consequential form designated by linguists with the terms "protasis" and "apodosis": "Being . . . , *only then* does one know that one is . . ." 205

An instance of time widens the interval so that the pregiven [*le donné*] of the *protasis*, "opposite two blacks," changes into the given [*la donnée*] of the *apodosis*, "one is a white," *the instant of the glance* being necessary for this to occur. Into the logical equivalence between the two terms, "two blacks : one white," temporal modulation introduces a form which, in the second moment, crystallizes into an authentic hypothesis; for it aims now at the real unknown of the problem, namely, the attribute of which the subject himself is unaware. In this step, the subject encounters the next logical combination,

and—being the only one to whom the attribute "black" can be assigned—is able, in the first phase of the logical movement, to formulate thus the following evidence:

(II) Were I a black, the two whites that I see would waste no time realizing that they are whites.

We have here an *intuition* by which the subject *objectifies* something more than the factual givens offered him by the sight of the two whites. A certain time is defined (in the two senses of taking on meaning and finding its limit) by its end, an end that is at once goal and term. For the two whites in the situation of seeing a white and a black, this time is *the time for comprehending*, each of the whites finding the key to his own problem in the inertia of his semblable. The evidence of this moment presupposes the duration of a *time of meditation* that each of the two whites must ascertain in the other, and that the subject manifests in the terms he attributes to their lips, as though they were written on a banderole: "Had I been a black, he would have left without waiting an instant. If he stays to meditate, it is because I am a white."

But how can we measure the limit of this time whose meaning has been thus objectified? The time for comprehending can be reduced to the instant of the glance, but this glance can include in its instant all the time needed for comprehending. The objectivity of this time thus vacillates with its limit. Its meaning alone subsists, along with the form it engenders of subjects who are *undefined except by their reciprocity*, and whose action is suspended by mutual causality in a time which gives way due to [*sous*] the very return of the intuition that it has objectified. It is through this temporal modulation that, with the second phase of the logical movement, a path is blazed which leads to the following evidence:

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(III) I hasten to declare myself a white, so that these whites, whom I consider in this way, do not precede me in recognizing themselves for what they are.

We have here the *assertion about oneself* through which the subject concludes the logical movement in the making of a *judgment*. The very return of the movement of comprehending, before [*sous*] which the temporal instance that objectively sustains it has vacillated, continues on in the subject in reflection. This instance reemerges for him therein in the subjective mode of a *time of lagging behind* the others in that very movement, logically presenting itself as the urgency of the *moment of concluding*. More strictly speaking, its evidence is revealed in a subjective penumbra as the growing illumination of a fringe at

the edge of the eclipse that the objectivity of the *time for comprehending* undergoes due to [*sous*] reflection.

It seems to the subject that the time required for the two whites to understand the situation in which they are faced with a white and a black does not logically differ from the time it took him to understand it himself, since this situation is merely his own hypothesis. But if his hypothesis is correct—if, that is, the two whites actually see a black—they do not have to make an assumption about it, and will thus precede him by the beat [*temps de battement*] he misses in having to formulate this very hypothesis. It is thus the *moment for concluding* that he is a white; should he allow himself to be beaten to this conclusion by his semblables, he *will no longer be able to determine* whether he is a black or not. Having surpassed the *time for comprehending the moment of concluding*, it is *the moment of concluding the time for comprehending*. Otherwise this time would lose its meaning. It is thus not because of some dramatic contingency, the seriousness of the stakes, or the competitiveness of the game, that time presses; it is owing to [*sous*] the urgency of the logical movement that the subject *precipitates* both his judgment and his departure ("precipitates" in the etymological sense of the verb: headlong), establishing the modulation in which temporal tension is reversed in a move to action [*tendance à l'acte*] manifesting to the others that the subject has concluded. But let us stop at this point 207
at which the subject arrives in his assertion at a truth that will be submitted to the test of doubt, but that he will be incapable of verifying unless he first attains it as a certainty. *Temporal tension* culminates here since, as we already know, it is the sequential steps of its release that will scand the test of its logical necessity. What is the logical value of this conclusive assertion? That is what I shall now try to bring out in the logical movement in which this conclusive assertion is verified.

Temporal Tension in the Subjective Assertion and Its Value Manifested in the Demonstration of the Sophism

The logical value of the third evidential moment, that is formulated in the assertion by which the subject concludes his logical movement, seems to me to deserve deeper exploration. It reveals, in effect, a form proper to an *assertive logic*, and we must indicate to which original *relations* this assertive logic can be applied.

Building on the propositional relations of the first two moments, *apodosis* and *hypothesis*, the conjunction manifested here builds up to a *motivation* of the conclusion "*so that there will not be*" (a lagging behind that engenders error), in which the ontological form of anxiety, curiously reflected in the grammat-

ically equivalent expression "*for fear that*" (the lagging behind might engender error), seems to emerge.

This form is undoubtedly related to the logical originality of the subject of the assertion; that is why I characterize it as *subjective assertion*, the logical subject here being but the *personal* form of the knowing subject who can only be expressed by "*I*." Otherwise stated, the judgment which concludes the sophism can only be borne by a subject who has formulated the assertion about himself, and cannot be imputed to him unreservedly by anyone else—unlike the relations of the *impersonal* and *undefined reciprocal* subjects of the first two moments that are essentially transitive, since the personal subject of the logical movement assumes [*assume*] them at each of these moments.

The reference to these two subjects highlights the logical value of the subject of the assertion. The former, expressed in the "*one*" of the "*one knows*
208 *that . . .*," provides only the general form of the noetic subject: he can as easily be god, table, or washbasin. The latter, expressed in "*the two whites*" who must recognize "*one another*," introduces the form of *the other as such*—that is, as pure reciprocity—since the one can only recognize himself in the other and only discover his own attribute in the equivalence of their characteristic time. The "*I*," subject of the conclusive assertion, is isolated from the other—that is, from the relation of reciprocity—by a logical *beat* [*battement de temps*]. This movement of the logical genesis of the *"I"* through a decanting of its own logical time largely parallels its psychological birth. Just as, let us recall, the psychological *"I"* emerges from an indeterminate specular transitivism, assisted by an awakened jealous tendency, the *"I"* in question here defines itself through a subjectification of *competition* with the other, in the function of logical time. As such, it seems to me to provide the essential logical form (rather than the so-called existential form) of the psychological "*I*."[3]

The essentially subjective ("*assertive*," in my terminology) value of the sophism's conclusion is attested to by how uncertain an observer (for example, the prison warden overseeing the game) would be, faced with the three subjects' simultaneous departure, in trying to decide whether any of them has correctly deduced the attribute he bears. For the subject has seized the moment of concluding that he is a white due to [*sous*] the *subjective* evidence of a lag-time which presses him on towards the exit, but even if he has not seized it, the *objective* evidence constituted by the others' departure leads him to act no differently: he leaves in step with them, convinced, however, that he is a black. All the observer can foresee is that if one of the three declares upon questioning that he is a black, having hastened to follow the other two, he will be the only one to do so in these terms.

The assertive judgment finally manifests itself here in an *act*. Modern

thought has shown that every judgment is essentially an act, and the dramatic contingencies here merely isolate this act in the subjects' departing movement. 209
One could imagine other means of expression for this act of concluding. What makes this act so remarkable in the subjective assertion demonstrated by the sophism is that it anticipates its own certainty owing to the temporal tension with which it is subjectively charged; and that, based on this very anticipation, its certainty is verified in a logical precipitation that is determined by the discharge of this tension—so that in the end the conclusion is no longer grounded on anything but completely objectified temporal instances, and the assertion is desubjectified to the utmost. As is demonstrated by what follows.

First of all, we witness the reappearance of the *objective time* of the initial intuition of the movement which, as though sucked up between the instant of its beginning and the haste of its end, had seemed to burst like a bubble. Owing to the force of doubt, which exfoliates the subjective certainty of the *moment of concluding*, objective time condenses here like a nucleus in the interval of the first *suspended motion*, and manifests to the subject its limit in the *time for comprehending* that, for the two others, the *instant of the glance* has passed and that the *moment of concluding* has returned.

While doubt has, since Descartes' time, been integrated into the value of judgment, it should certainly be noted that—for the form of assertion studied here—the latter's value depends less upon the doubt which suspends the assertion than on the *anticipated certainty* which first introduced it.

But in order to understand the function of this doubt for the subject of the assertion, let us consider the objective value of the first suspension for the observer whose attention we have already drawn to the subjects' overall motion. Although it may have been impossible up until this point to judge what any of them had concluded, we find that each of them manifests uncertainty about his conclusion, but will have it confirmed without fail if it was correct, rectified—perhaps—if it was erroneous.

Indeed, if any one of them is subjectively able to make the first move, but then stops, it is because he begins to doubt whether he has really grasped the *moment of concluding* that he is a white—but he will immediately grasp it anew since he has already experienced it subjectively. If, on the contrary, he let the others precede him and, in so doing, convince him that he is a black, he cannot doubt whether he has grasped the moment of concluding precisely because he has not *subjectively appropriated* it (and in effect he can even find in the others' new initiative logical confirmation of his belief that he differs 210
from them). If he stops, it is because he subordinates his own conclusion so thoroughly to that which manifests the others' conclusion that he immediately suspends his own when they seem to suspend theirs; thus he doubts whether

he is a black until they again show him the way, or he himself discovers it, concluding this time that he is a black or that he is a white—perhaps incorrectly, perhaps correctly—the point remaining impenetrable to everyone other than himself.

But the logical descent continues on towards the second temporal suspension. Each of the subjects, having reappropriated the subjective certainty of the *moment of concluding*, can once again call it into question. It is now sustained, however, by the already accomplished objectification of the *time for comprehending*, and its being called into question lasts but the *instant of the glance*; for the mere fact that this hesitation is not the others' first but rather their second, suffices to put an end to his own hesitation as soon as he perceives theirs, immediately indicating to him as it does that he is certainly not a black.

The subjective time of the *moment of concluding* is at last objectified here. This is proven by the fact that, even if any one of the subjects had not yet grasped it, it would nevertheless force itself upon him now; for this subject who would have concluded the first scansion by following the two others, convinced thereby that he was a black, would now—because of the present second scansion—be constrained to reverse his judgment.

With the termination of the logical assembling of the two suspended motions in the act in which they reach completion, the sophism's assertion of certainty is *desubjectified to the utmost*. As is shown by the fact that according to our observer, assuming he finds the suspended motions to be synchronous for the three subjects, all three of them will indubitably declare themselves white upon questioning.

Lastly, one can point out that at this same moment, if each subject can, when questioned, express, in the *subjective assertion* which has given him a certainty as the sophism's conclusion, the certainty he has finally verified—stating it in these terms:

> I hastened to conclude that I was a white, because otherwise they would have preceded me in reciprocally recognizing themselves to be whites (and had I given them the time to do so, they would have led me astray,
> 211 which would have been my undoing)

—he can also express this certainty, in its *verification* which has been *desubjectified* to the utmost in the logical movement, in the following terms:

> One must know that one is a white when the others have hesitated twice in leaving.

In its first form, this conclusion can be advanced as veritable by a subject once he has constituted the sophism's logical movement, but can as such only be assumed [*assumé*] personally by him; whereas in its second form, it requires the logical descent verifying the sophism to be consummated by all the subjects, although it remains applicable by any one of them to each of the others. It is not even ruled out that one, but only one, of the subjects might reach this second form without having constituted the sophism's logical movement, having simply followed its verification as manifested by the other two.

The Truth of the Sophism as Temporalized Reference of Oneself to Another: Anticipating Subjective Assertion as the Fundamental Form of a Collective Logic

The truth of the sophism thus only comes to be verified through its *presumption*, so to speak, in the assertion it constitutes. Its truth thus turns out to depend upon a tendency that aims at the truth—a notion that would be a logical paradox were it not reducible to the temporal tension that determines the moment of concluding.

Truth manifests itself in this form as preceding error and advancing solely in the act that engenders its certainty; error, conversely, manifests itself as being confirmed by its inertia and correcting itself only with difficulty by following truth's conquering initiative.

But to what sort of relation does such a logical form correspond? To a form of objectification engendered by the logical form in its movement—namely, the reference of an *"I"* to the common measure of the reciprocal subject, or otherwise stated, of others as such, that is, insofar as they are others for one another. This common measure is provided by a certain *time for comprehending*, which proves to be an essential function of the logical relationship of reciprocity. This reference of the *"I"* to others as such must, in each critical moment, be temporalized in order to dialectically reduce the *moment of concluding the time for comprehending* to last but the *instant of the glance*. 212

Only the slightest disparity need appear in the logical term "others" for it to become clear how much the truth for all depends upon the rigor of each; that truth—if reached by only some—can engender, if not confirm, error in the others; and, moreover, that if in this race to the truth one is but alone, although not all may get to the truth, still no one can get there but by means of the others.

These forms assuredly find easy application in bridge table and diplomatic strategy, not to mention in the handling of the "complex" in psychoanalytic practice.

Here, however, I would like to indicate their contribution to the logical notion of collectivity.

Tres faciunt collegium, as the adage goes, and the *collectivity* is already integrally represented in the form of the sophism, since the collectivity is defined as a group formed by the reciprocal relations of a definite number of individuals—unlike the *generality*, which is defined as a class abstractly including an indefinite number of individuals.

But it suffices to extend the sophism's proof by recurrence to see that it can be logically applied to an unlimited number of subjects,[4] it being stipulated that the "negative" attribute can only appear in a number equal to the number of subjects minus one.[5] But temporal objectification is more difficult to conceptualize as the collectivity grows, seeming to pose an obstacle to a *collective logic* with which one could complete classical logic.

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I will nevertheless show what such a logic would have to furnish, faced with the inadequacy one senses in an assertion such as "I am a man," couched in whatever form of classical logic and derived as the conclusion from whatever premises one likes (for example, "man is a rational animal," etc.).

This assertion assuredly appears closer to its true value when presented as the conclusion of the form here demonstrated of anticipating subjective assertion:

(1) A man knows what is not a man;
(2) Men recognize themselves among themselves as men;
(3) I declare myself to be a man for fear of being convinced by men that I am not a man.

This movement provides the logical form of all "human" assimilation, precisely insofar as it posits itself as assimilative of a barbarism, but it nonetheless reserves the essential determination of the *"I"*. . .[6]

Notes

1. This infirmity applies no less to the minds formed by this tradition, as is evinced by the following note I received from an intellect—who is nevertheless adventurous in other fields—after a soirée at which the discussion of my fruitful sophism had provoked a veritable confusional panic amongst the select intellects of an intimate circle. Despite its opening words, the note bears the traces of a laborious restatement of the problem.

My dear Lacan, a hasty note to direct your attention to a new difficulty: the reasoning admitted yesterday is not truly conclusive, for none of the three possible states—000, 00●, or 0●●—is reducible to any of the others (appearances notwithstanding); only the last is decisive.

Consequence: when A assumes he is black, neither B nor C can leave, for they cannot deduce from their behavior

whether they are black or white. For if one of them is black, the other leaves; and if, instead, the first is white, the other leaves anyway, because the first does not do so (and vice versa). If A assumes he is white, B and C cannot leave in this case either. The upshot being that, here too, A cannot deduce the color of his disk from the others' behavior.

My contradictor, in *seeing* the case too clearly, thus remained blind to the fact that it is not the others' departure, but rather their waiting, which determines the subject's judgment. And in order to hastily refute me, he allowed himself to overlook what I am trying to demonstrate here: the function of haste in logic.

2. "Irreducibles," as my contradictor in the previous footnote put it.

3. Thus the "*I*," third form of the subject of enunciation in logic, is here still the "first person," but also the only and last. For the grammatical second person is related to another function of language. As for the grammatical third person, it is only alleged: it is a demonstrative, which is equally applicable to the field of the enunciated and to everything distinguishable therein.

4. Here is the example for four subjects, four white disks, and three black ones:

A thinks that, if he were a black, any one of the others—B, C, or D—could surmise concerning the two others that, if he himself were black, they would waste no time realizing they are whites. Thus one of the others—B, C, or D—would quickly have to conclude that he himself is white, which does not happen. When A realizes that, if they—B, C, and D—see that he is a black, they have the advantage over him of not having to make a supposition about it, he hurries to conclude that he is a white.

But don't they all leave at the same time as him? A, in doubt, stops; and the others do too. But what does it mean if they all stop too? Either they stop because they fall prey to the same doubt as A, and A can thus race off again without worry. Or it is that A is black, and that one of the others (B, C, or D) has been led to wonder whether the departure of the other two does not in fact signify that he is a black, and to surmise that their stopping does not necessarily imply he is white—since either can still wonder for an instant whether he is not a black. Still this allows him [B, C, or D] to posit that they [reading *ils* (they) for *il* (he)] should both start up again before him if he is a black, and to start up again himself from this waiting in vain, assured of being what he is, that is, white. Why do B, C, and D not do it? Well if they do not, then I will, says A. So they all start up again.

Second stop. Assuming I am black, A says to himself, it must now dawn upon one of the others—B, C, or D—that, if he were a black, he could not impute to the other two this further hesitation; therefore he is white. B, C, and D should thus start up again before him [A]. Failing which, A starts up again, and all the others along with him.

Third stop. But all of them should know by now that they are whites if I am truly black, A says to himself. If they stop, then . . .

And the certainty is verified in three *suspensive scansions.*

5. [Added in 1966:] Compare the condition of this minus one in the attribute with the psychoanalytic function of the One-extra [*l'Un-en-plus*] in the subject of psychoanalysis (*Écrits* 1966, 480).

6. [Added in 1966:] The reader who continues on in this collection is advised to return to this reference to the collective, which constitutes the end of the present article, in order to situate what Freud produced in the field of collective psychology (*Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*, 1920 [*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*]): the collective is nothing but the subject of the individual.